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VEDIC ORIGIN OF *NRTTA* AND *PINDIBANDHAS* (Translated from Hindi by Rashma N. Kalsie)

ABSTRACT: The article argues that Indian theatre (*natya*), dance (*nrtta*), and ultimately the concept of sacred images (*murtis*) developed organically from the Vedic ritual tradition, rather than being later imports from non-Vedic or Greek/Dravidian cultures. The older Western theory that Vedic Aryans and Dravidians represented fundamentally different religious cultures, with Vedic fire sacrifice belonging to the Aryans and image worship belonging to indigenous Dravidian traditions, is subjected to strong criticism and ultimately rejected. The Indian theatrical art and, closely connected with it, the worship of sacred images or idols could be best understood as an autochthonous, native development, unhindered and undisturbed by any foreign interference.

KEY WORDS: *Nrtta*, *Pindibadhas*, ancient Indian theater, idol worship, Vedic poetry.

The story of the origin of *natya* that appears in the early chapters of the *Natyashastra* is not a mere glorification of the Vedic tradition. It is an interesting history of the metamorphosis of an ancient worship method, that is the Vedic *yajna* with all its components – the text, the song etc., into a new art form, called *natya*. In *Satya Yuga*, there was no sorrow, but natya or theatre requires both happiness and sorrow for its creation. Therefore, in the *Tretaa Yuga*, when there was ample sorrow, Indra requested Brahma to create a new visual-auditory art form to enhance knowledge and provide entertainment.

Indra's request was not for the entertainment of the gods alone. Indra wanted the new art form to be wholesome and a source of deep, best and easily comprehensible knowledge. "Let that be the fifth Veda! Those who do not have access to the education of the Vedas, may also

get the knowledge of the four Vedas through this new art." (*Natyashastra* 1 / 11-12, Baroda Edition). To fulfill the wish of Indra, Brahma created the *Natya Veda* in which the text was borrowed from *Rig Veda*, the song from Sama, the abhinaya from Yajur, and the rasa from *Atharva Veda* (1/17). Then Indra told Brahma, "Gods do not have the ability to assimilate this new Veda, so it should be in custody of the sages." It is at this point that Brahma gave *Natya Veda* to Bharata Muni (1 / 21-4). Bharata created a performance using the three *Vrittis*, namely *Aarabhatii*, *Saatvatii*, and *Bhaaratii*, but the performance failed. (1/41). In other words, even the Vedic text, acting, song and *rasa*, failed to provide complete enjoyment.

DRAMA INCOMPLETE WITHOUT *KAISHIKII VRTTI*

Then Brahma instructed Bharata to include *Kaishikii vrtti* in *Natya* (1/42). On asking for the means to achieve the same, Brahma created *Apsaras* and instructed Bharata to include them in *Natya*. (1/43 – 4).

It is worth noting that elements from four Vedas failed tocreate complete Natya. Natya needs *Kaishikii vrtti* for a fulfilling experience. When Bharata asked for the wherewithal to construct the *Kaishikii vrti*, Bharata also said that he had seen Kaishikii in Shankara's dance. Shankara's dance was embellished with rhythmic movement, meaning and beauty. Hence, Neelkantha Shiva and his dance is the source of *Kaishikii* (1/45).

In addition to the four *vrttis*, Bharata also included the art of *Gaandharva*, which is singing and playing the musical instruments in a play. The singing in Natya diverged from the Samveda singing, and was based on *laukika* (*non-vedic*) notes, rhythm and poetry. That is to say, for further development of theatrical presentation, it was a non-vedic but popular or *loka* music. It was not just rural tunes or "folk" music, but formal and elite, yet not having exactly the same notes and characteristics as in the vedic chants of three tones of *uddaata*, *anudaata* and *svarita* of Rig, Yajur and Atharva, nor having the seven-note sequence of *Saamagaana*. It was an elevated and formal music and it included, what was popularly known as the *Mahageetas*. These were given names such as *Vardhmaanaka*, *Aasaarita* etc.

The first use of this art form was done by Bharata at the behest of Brahma. The production was mounted at Indra's Flag Festival (1/55). The performance made use of, or say included blessings or *Ashiirvachana* called *Naandi*, and an *Ashtapadi* which was in the tradition of "*Veda-nirmita*", or the Vedic songs! Then, a theatrical "*Anukriti*" was presented, in which the demons were shown to be defeated by the gods (1 / 56-7). Bharata was rewarded by the gods for this successful production (1/60) but the *asuras* were furious. The asuras froze the actors/natas using the

magic of illusion. Indra was infuriated by this obstacle. He beat the demons with his flag, wounded and chased them away. Thereafter, Indra's flag was given the name *jarjara* (that which tears) as it tore apart the attack of *asuras* (1 / 68-9).

THE NEED FOR A *NAATYAGRIHA* OR THE AUDITORIUM

When the same experiment was repeated at the flag festival of Indra, the demons again indulged in vandalism. Then Bharata turned to Brahma for help. In order to protect the theatrical experiment, Brahma presented a solution which was to make a *natya mandapa*. Vishwakarma (the proto-architect) was engaged to build a theatre hall (1/79). All the Gods were ordered to protect the *Naatyagriha*. Further, they were ordered to inhabit the naatyagriha in their subtle form (1/83). The Gods took their places in the different parts of the theatre as per the ceremonies of worshiping and protecting the newly made theatre house. The whole process was called *rangapuujana* and has since become an established tradition.

In this ceremony, in every part of the theatre building, a special *devataa* or God is appointed to protect that part. Even today, as a parallel to that ceremony, a ritual is done in order to protect an individual's body called *anganyaasa*. Just like *ranganyaasa* was done for the protection of theatre building, for protection of an individual's body from disease or hurt, we still use the Hindu ritual called *anganyaasa*. Gods are placed in their subtle forms in the forehead, arms, femurs, feet, etc., to guard these. In the *Naatyagriha*, the moon was placed in the mandapa, Varuna in the roof, the fire God in the Vedi, all the gods in the *bhaandas* (musical instruments), the *Apsaras* in the *shaalas* (supporting stones), *shaktis* in the stones, and Brahma himself in the centre. Here, it should not be imagined that this was done by placing any paintings or carved idols of the deities.

After the creation of the theatre house, Brahma asked Viruupaaksha and other demons, "Why have you united together to bring about the destruction of theatre?" The demons responded, "O, Brahma, the drama you have created at the behest of the gods, insults us and elevates them. You are the grandfather of all people, you should not have done this. For you the devataas and the daanavas are all alike because they both are born of you!" Brahma said, "Enough! Now, give up your anger and sadness too! This *Natya Veda* was made because it is expected to have action, emotion and concordance!"

Explaining this *Abhinavagupta* adds, "The purpose of *Natya* is not to promulgate or name the Daityas as inauspicious or the Devatas as

auspicious! What is then the purpose? The purpose of *Natya* Veda is to establish that good deeds result in good results and bad karma results in the opposite!"

प्रत्यक्षसाक्षात्कारकल्पे नाट्ये प्रदशर्नीयम् !.... अतएव भवतामपि
धमार्दौ यः सदु् पायः सो अपि शुभविपाकत्वेन दशिर् तः

In *Natya*, the creative work that is performed on the stageis live and can be seen directly by the audience. Therefore, demons' good contribution to dharma/righteousness can also been depicted in *Natya*. (*Abhinavabhaaratii* 1 / 101-6)!"

This story indicates the impartiality of the Vedic tradition and its insistence on righteousness/dharma. At the same time, a play will always provoke some people and since they can hold up the production by creating obstacles, therefore a theatre hall is needed to ward off such obstacles. After the *Naatyagriha* was built and duly consecrated, Brahma had Bharata perform the first play which was made in the dramatic genre known as *Samavakaara Dasharuupaka* (4/1). The name of the play was *Amrta Manthana*. Satisfied with the result, Brahma took Bharata to perform the play in the presence of Lord Shiva at his abode in the Himalayas.

There, Bharata first performed a preliminary act called puurvaranga and then put on a play entitled Tripuradaah, which falls in the category of the genre called Dima. Dima is another one of the ten genres called dasharuupakas.

ASSIMILATION OF DANCE IN THEATRE

Shiva and his followers were very happy with this experiment. Shiva said to Brahma, "Wah! Mahaamati, the play you have created will enhance fame, wisdom, virtue and auspiciousness! But once I too was reminded of *nrtta*/dance in the evening time. The *nrtta* that is embellished with *karanas* and *alankaaras*." (4 / 12-3)

"Use this *nrtta* Bharata! You must use it with *Vardhamaanaka* and *Aasaarita* songs in the puravaranga part of the play! Include this dance in the *Mahaageetas* as well. In all, the meaning of the poetic compositions is to be enacted through dance gestures. What you have shown to us is pure puurvaranga, now include dance in it to make it an embellished and multivalent (chitra) performance (9 / 15-6)!"

Hearing the words of Shiva, Brahma said, "O Surottama! Show us the use of *angahaaras*!" Shiva then called Tandu and instructed, "Teach Bharata how to use the *angaharas*" (4/17).

(मया अपि इदं स्मृतं नृत्तम् सन्ध्याकालेषु नृत्यता /
नानाकरणसम्युक्तैरङ्गहारैर्विर् भूषितम् ! पूवर् ङ्ग विधावस्मिन् त्वयासम्यक् प्रयोज्यताम् /
वधर्मानकयोगेषु गीतेष्वासारितेषु च ! महागीतेषु
चैवाथारन् सम्यगेवाभिनेष्यसि / यष्चायं पूवर् ङ्गस्तु त्वया शुद्धः
प्रयोजितः / एभिर्विर् मिश्रिताश्च अयं चित्रो नाम भविष्यति ! श्रुत्वा
महेश्वरवचः प्रत्युक्तस्तु स्वयंभुवा / प्रयोगमङ्गहाराणाम् आचक्ष्व
सुरसत्तम ! ततः तण्डुं समाहूय प्रोक्तवान् भुवनेश्वरः /
प्रयोगमङ्गहाराणाम् आचक्ष्व भरताय वै ! नाशाः ४/ १३-१८ बरौदा
संस्करण १९९२) – 4/13/18 Baroda Issue 1992

It is necessary to state here that Shiva does not say that he invented the dance, but said he remembered it! *Abhinavagupta* summarizes that in saying that he remembered Nrtta, Shiva confirms that dance/*nrtta* is eternal. But employing *karanas*, *angahaaras*, and *rechakas*, he created the *kaishikii vrtti* and changed the *shudha purvaranga* of Bharata by transforming it into a chitra or visually embellished performance. Let us see now what are these *karanas*, *angahaaras* and *rechakas*.

"By placing both the hands in a specific way, in alignment with both the legs, one creates a combination or *samyoga* which is called the *karana* in *Nrtta*!" A total of 108 *karanas* have been described. हस्तपादसमायोगो नृत्तस्य करणंभवेत्

2, 3, 4 or 5 *karanas* form an *angahaara*! There are 32 types of *angaaharas* and four types of *rechakas*. Moving and rotating the feet, waist, hands, or the neck in various ways is called a *rechaka*. All three makes up the fundamental language of the Indian dance. *Nrtta* when expressively associated with the emotions of a character or a story transforms into what is called *nrtya* or *natya*/play. The teaching of this language of the dance, that is, *karana*, *angahaara* and *rechaka*, was called *Taandava* because it was Tandu who taught dance on Shiva's orders.

Here *Abhinavagupta* asks, "Is the purpose of this dance that includes karana, angahaara and rechaka is to merely make the Puurvaranga exquisite? No! Then, what is it? Answer: the deities have to be appeased too! And that is achieved by creating an astonishing variety (*vichitrataa*). A *pindibandha* is created for each God (*devataa*) in which there is an imitation (*pratikriti*) of the flag carried by that *devataa*. For this purpose, Bharata Muni recalls a *Puraakalpa* (historical story) of the origin of *pindibandhas* in the four verses (*kaarikaas*) beginning with "*mridangabheri onwards*" (4/254-7).

ननुवेवं करणाङ्गहाररेचकाः किं पूवर् ङ्गं एव वैचित्र्यकारित्वमात्रेणैव
एव उपयुज्यते ! नेति, प्रस्तुमः ! कथं तहिर् दे वतापरितोषकत्वेनापि !
तदपि च वैचित्र्यमात्रात् ! यावत्ततत्तद्दे वता

ध्वजप्रतिकृतिभूतपिण्डीबन्धनिष्पत्तिद्वारेण इति अभिप्रायेण
पिण्डीबन्धावतरणाय भरतमुनिः पुराकल्पमाह श्लोक चतुष्टयेन,
मृदंगभेरी इत्यादिना !

This dance was performed by Lord Shiva in the evening after the destruction of Dakshayagya. Musical instruments (*aatodayas*) like *Mridanga, Bherii, Patah, Bhaanda, Dindima, Gomukha, Panava*, and *Dardara* accompanied Shiva's dance as he displayed various *angahaaras*, timing his movement with beat and rhythm. Seeing Shankar dance with a rich display of *rechakas* and *angahaaras*, his consort Parvati joined the dance with graceful, gentle dance moves (*lasya*)! (4/254-6)

मृदंगभेरीपटहैभार्ण्डडिण्डिमगोमुखैः / पणवैदर्दरैश्चैव सवार्तोद्यैः
प्रवादितैः ! दक्षयज्ञे विनिहिते सन्ध्याकाले महेश्वरः / नानाङ्गहारैः
प्रानृत्य लयताल वशानुगैः ! रेचकैरङ्गहारैश्च नृत्यन्तं वीक्ष्य शङ्करम् /
सुकुमारप्रयोगेण नृत्यति स्म च पावरती (४/२५४-६) !

The same *angaharas* etc., when done with feminine tenderness, the same movements done softly are called "*laasya*". The vigorous style creates taandava and gentle style creates lasya. Based on this verse given in the *Natyashastra*, my Guru Acharya Kailash Chandra Dev Brihaspati composed the hymn "*Paarvatilaasyam*". In the last line of the hymn, the *laasya* of the goddess culminates in the embrace of Shankar!

झननझनन झननझनन झनेतिकाँस्यतालकम् स्वनानुवातिर् नी
गिरीन्द्रजाश्रयेत् फणीनिद्रणम् ! (पावरतीलास्यम्)

EMERGENCE OF *PINDIBANDHA* (BINDING THE BODY) IN DANCE

Seeing the *Tandava-Lasya* of Shiva and Parvati, disciples of Shiva called Nandi and Bhadramukha along with other followers and seeing the composition of *Pindis* in dance, named those compositions as *Pindibandhas*.

पिण्डीबंधास्ततो दृष्ट्वा नंदिभद्रमुखा गणाः/ चक्रुस्ते नाम
पिण्डीनांबन्धमासां सलक्षणम् ! (४/२५७) (4/257)

Taking on or tying in the elements of a single *devata*'s shape, armaments, flag, vehicle, and temperament etc in the body of the dancer while dancing is called *pindibandha*.

In the words of *Abhinavagupta*: "Evening time is most appropriate for pursuing happiness. That is why at this time Shiva dances without

hesitation! Seeing Shiva using vigorous rechakas and *angahaaras*, and then seeing Parvati use gentle, graceful steps, Nandi and Bhadramukha, etc., named the performance as *Pindibandha*!"

"Shiva and Parvati first understood the shape of the deity (of the deity to be made into a *pindibandha*) and used it to create an analogy of the deity in their dance! It had the properties or the qualities of the deity. The last word of the verse is "*salakshana*", (in grammatical terms it) is an *avyayiibhava samaasa*. That is, the qualities will always be present in the performance. Shiva and Parvati had chosen the required *anga-haaras* only by looking at the unique shape of the deity."

सन्ध्याकाले दिनात्यय इति प्रमोदिवकाससमये ! तत एव पुण्यात्मके !
सततमतिशयेन भृशं च नृत्यति तद्धे तोः ! रेचकै रङ्गहारै श्चैव न तु
सुकुमारं प्रनृत्यन्तम् शङ्करम् वीक्ष्य, सुकुमारप्रयोगमेव कृत्वा तु
अथरतत्वेन नृत्यन्तीम् भगवतीम् च वीक्ष्य ! ततः तद्धे तुकानिप्ण्डीबन्धान्
दृष्ट्वा नन्दी तथा
भद्रमुखवीरभद्रप्रभृतयो ननिदभद्रदे वतागणास्ततप्रमुखाः पिण्डीबन्धनाम
चक्रुः ! आकारसादृष्येन च पिण्डी-बन्धं प्रयोगं चक्रुः ! सलक्ष्णम् लक्ष्ण
पयरन्तं ! अन्तवचने अव्ययीभावः ! आकारविशेषसंपत्तिं दृष्ट्वा
सम्यक्प्रयुज्य लक्ष्णं विदधिर इति यावत् ! (४/२५६) (4/256)

After a description of the genesis of *Pindibandhas* from *Nrtta*, the names of each devataas' pindii is recounted. *Iishvara's pindi* is called *Iishwarii, Nandi's Pattasii, Chandikaa's Simvahinii, Vishnu's Taarkshii, Brahmaa's Padyam, Indra's Airavatii, Manmatha's Jhasha Kumara's Shikhii, Shri's Rupaa, Ganga's Dhaaraa, Yama's Paasha, Varuna's Nadii, Dhanada's Yakshii, Balaraama's Halaa,Sarpa's Sarpa, Ganesha's Mahaa,* and *Rudra's Raudarii.* It is to be noted that most names are taken from a given *devataa's* vehicle, flag or weapon...

Abhinavagupta explains further, "Now here in five verses, *Pancha Shlokas* (258-62), *Iishwara's pindi* is *Iishwarii*, wherein the first *shloka* lists the names of the Devas and their *Pindibandhas*. Lord Shiva is the chief and worthy of gratification, therefore he must not be called (out of respect) by his name but by a general word Iishvara, says Bharata, and Shiva's *Pindi* should be called Iishvarii which is in the shape of *Shival-ingam*.

"*Pindi* means a special shape (*aakritivishesha*). Pindi means using the body as the basis to create a shape by uniting the parts in a given way. The *Pindi* is that shape which binds the limbs in a certain way, and that which encaptures (*praveshyate*) the intelligence (*buddhi*). It is can also be a shape of the body that describes vast spaces etc. (*vyomaadi*). Concentration of many characteristics of something shown in a single shape is *Pinidi*.

We can also say that the name derived from the special features of the *pindi* have been listed by Bharata. *Karana* and *angahaara* create the shape. At the very start Lord Shiva's physical manifestation will be made into a *Pindibandha*."

"एवं प्रधानदे वतोद्देशेन तावत्पिण्डीबन्धान्दशर्यति
श्लोकपन्चकेनेश्वरस्येत्यादिना ! भगवत एव एव प्रधान्यात्
परितोषणीयतेति तस्य व्यक्तं यदीश्वरशब्दवाच्यं निविर् शेषम् रूपं तस्य
तादृश एव शिवलिङ्गाकृतिः पिण्डीबन्धः ! पिण्डी आधाराङ्गादि संघातः ! तया

बध्यते बुद्धौ प्रवेश्यते तनुभावेन सकलया वा व्योमादि रूपयेति
पिण्डीबन्ध आकृति विशेषः ! तस्य एकदे शाभिधानं पिण्डीति ! यदि वा
पिण्डीविशिष्टान्येव तान्याहेति ! आकारो बध्यते सम्पाद्यते पुनरनेनेति
पिण्डीबन्ध करणाङ्गाहारादिः ! आरम्भे च भगवत एवाव्यक्तरूपस्य
पिण्डीबन्धो भविष्यति !"

So finally, the dance that Shiva recalled from memory and which he taught to Tandu has three parts, *Angahaara* (made up of *Karanas*), *Rechakas* and *Pindibandhas*.

रेचका अङ्गहारश्च पिण्डीबन्धास्तथै व च / सृष्टा भगवता दत्तास्तण्डवे
मुनये तदा" !! (४/२६४) (4/264)

Tandu included *Bhaandas* (musical instruments) and song into the performance and then it was called it Tandava!

तण्डुनापि ततः सम्यग्गानभाण्डसमन्वितः / नृत्तप्रयोगः सृष्टो यः स
ताण्डव इति स्मृतः (४/२६५) (4/265)

Putting this education to a good use, Bharata included *nrtta* in the *Purvaranga* and embellished the act.

THE PURPOSE OF DANCE

To understand the purpose of dance, its uniqueness and what fuels the propitiation of *devataas*, the *munis* who had an academic curiosity about the *Natyashastra* asked, "When the matter and meaning is derived from the poetry/text, and is presented by skilled specialists via acting, then what is the need to create dance and what is the expected disposition? This dance (in *Puurvaranga*) is neither connected with the songs, their meaning, nor does it convey the emotion of the poem; then why have you advocated the use of dance in *Aasaarita* and other songs?

यदा प्राप्तयथरमथार्नां तज्ज्ञैरभिनयः कृतः / कस्मान्नृत्तं कृतं ह्येतत्
स्वभावमपेक्षते ! ४/२६६ (4/266) ! न गीतकाथर्-सम्बद्धं न चाप्यथरस्य
भावकम् / कस्मान्नृत्तं कृतं ह्येतद्गीतेष्वासारितेषु च ?" (४/२६७) !
(4/267)

Bharata Muni clarified that dance is not always used to convey the emotions of words. In all the societies on earth and in the various worlds (*lokas*), *nrtta* is divine by nature and is the symbol of auspiciousness. It is included in social events such as marriage or *aavaaha* (visit of the son-in-law along with his wife at her parental home, as defined by Abhinavagupta), any ritual or joyful event in the family, or a pleasure gathering. Dance is the best antidote for inauspiciousness and mental disturbance. It is always accompanied with songs. Lord Shiva instructed Tandu that *nritta* be employed in *Vardhamaanaka* and *Asaarita* songs. A song in which one sees an amplification (*vardhana*) of *kalaa* (length of beat), *laya* (rhythm) and alphabets of composition (*aksharas*) is called *Vardhamaanaka* (4/ 274).

THE TECHNIQUE OF USING *NRTTA* IN *AASAARITA* AND OTHER SONGS

In further verses, Bharata Muni explains at what point should this taandava nrtta be used in the *purvaranga*? In the ancient theatre house there were no side-wings like in today's European stage. The back wall of the stage had two doors and an altar was made on the stage between the two doors on which the musicians were to sit. Unlike today they did not sit in the side wings or in the corner on one side of the stage, but they sat in the middle of the stage on the *vedika*/platform-alter near the back wall and in complete view of the audience. They were the first to enter through the two doors. They entered in a ceremonial sequence and sat on the *vedika*. They fixed their vocal notes and then matched the instruments with their voices. The audience could only hear their voices, but did not see them, because two persons would stand in front of them and cover them with a '*patii*' or a curtain. The cloth screen was removed after the matching of the instruments was complete.

The *puuvaranga* was done in nineteen steps, nine of which were behind the curtain and ten after it was removed.

1. *Pratyahaara* (entry of musicians), 2. *Avataarnaa* (entry of the male singer and the female singer), 3. *Aarambha* (matching notes and singing by all), 4. *Aashraavanaa* (musicians matching their instruments with the singer's voice and playing a bandish/composition on one instrument), 5. *Vaktrapaanii* (checking by playing instruments only), 6. *Parighattanaa*

(bandish on the instruments in which Veena notes were displayed and checked), 7. *Sanghotana* (three Paanis i.e. the three variations of laya), 8. *Maargasarita* (in which *Pushkara*/drums are added to the Bandish along with Tantrii or strings), and 9. A part of *Aasaarita* (a song with stretched and varied notes) all the nine were performed behind the curtain.
2. *Giitavidhi, Uthaapanaa, Parivartanaa, Naandi, Shushkaavkrshta, Rangdvaara, Chaarii. Mahaachaarii, Trigat, & Prastaavanaa* were performed after the curtain was raised (as it happens in Kutiyattam today). (Details of this are available in my book *Dramatic Concepts: Greek and Indian* (DK Printworld Delhi, 1994, p. 158-60)). Taandava was performed after the end of the *taal paksha* of the *Aasaarita* song and after the curtain/ *patta* had been flicked away. This marked the start of the *geetapaksha* of the *Aasaarita*, which was enacted by the dancers who entered one after the other. These dancers also employed the *pindibandhas* to accompany the *Aasaarita* songs. How was this done is explained further.

"Once the Kutapa (a band of male singers, female singers, harpists, *vansi* players and *mridanga* players), is seated on the stage the director must plan to have the Aasaarita performed (through action that demonstrates the limbs of the art of *Aasaarita*) on stage." (4/276). Then we do an action called *Upohana* (which means to narrate concisely and completely the exposition or the *Uuhana* of the notes, beat and text) and the action that accompanies the strings (*tantrii*) and the song, but is not accompanied with drums or the *pushkara* instruments. Once this is over, the dancer enterswith the sound of *pushkara* instruments! (4/277)"

Musical instruments shall follow the class of the *karanas* (strokes on drums) played on the *pushkara* instruments, and the dancer shall perform the *chaaris*. After performing *rechakas* in the *vaishakhasthanaka* posture, the dancer will enter the *rangamandapa* or the stage carrying the flowers in her hands. After offering the flowers, she walks the circumference of the stage, bows to the devataas and then starts her *abhinaya*. When the dancer is acting to the song there should be no playing of the musical instruments, but the drums are customarily played with the *angaharas* performed by the dancer. In this *tandava* dance, the knowledgeable instrumentalists should employ only those strokes or *praharas* of the *sama, rakta, vibhakata* and *sfuta* varieties that are suited to her dance.

In this way, after the songs and instruments have been presented, the first dancer shall leave the stage. Similarly, other dancers also enter one by one (4/278 – 83)! All of these dancers who enter in a sequence (turn by turn), shall perform *angahaara* named *paryastaka*, until it is time to start the formation of the *pindibandhas* (4/284).

After performing *pindibandhan*, all the dancers should exit the stage. Musicians are allowed to play the instruments while *pindibandhan* performance is in progress. When the *angahara paryastaka* is being performed

the musicians can be instructed to demonstrate the *karanas* on *chitra veena* and *ogha veena* (striking vigorously with fingers). Here (during the performance of *Aasaarita*) the same movement (the sequence of *Aasaarita lakshana*) has to be repeated. (4/275–6)!

The process of *Aasaarita* is carried forth by six characteristics/ definitions. These are: 1. Dancers are to enter one by one 2. Solo dancer to demonstrate *paryastaka* 3. The dancers come together to create *angahara* formations (which also includes *pindibandhana*) 4. Dancers exit stage 5. Dance and musical instruments are allowed in *paryastaka* until it is time for *pindibandhana* 6. Creation of exceptional vividness in the dance and the playing of the musical instruments. These are essential in every *Aasaarita*. (As explained by *Abhinavagupta*).

It is essential to clarify the details of the prescribed process of performing an *Aasaarita* again! In the aforesaid *purvaranga*, after the *taal-avidhi* is completed in the *Aasaarita*, a female dancer enters with flowers in her hands and therein starts the enacting of the song and dance. After accomplishing the above she exits stage. Now the first female dancer of the four dancers who are to perform the *pindibandhan* enters stage. She demonstrates *paryastaka* followed by the *pindibandhan* and waits on the stage for others to perform. Similarly, all the four dancers complete the *Aasaarita* one after the other. *Aasaarita* and its process has been explained above. The second, third and the rest of *Aasaaritas* are also performed in the same way.

In order to expostulate the technique of *Aasaarita* singing, Bharat Muni describes the second *Aasaarita* as well. "Yet again at the time of *Aasaarita* singing is organized and the prior method of dancers' entry is repeated. (*prayastaka* followed by *pindibandha*) & the second *Aasaarita* is enacted with meaning and then the text that has been enacted is demonstrated as dance. (4/287-8). The dancers exit the stage after completing the second *Aasaarita*. And the other dancers also shall follow the prescribed method to enter and then perform. (4/289).

"The steps of *Asaarita* are repeated for musical instruments and singing, going over the same sequence with every line. In the first section of *Aasaarita* one dancer is used, in the second part there are two dancers, three dancers in the third, four in the fourth. (4/290-1).

"Now there are four ways to make *pindis*: *pindi, shrinkhalikaa, lataa and bhedyaka*! After creating the *pindi* (by the solo dancer in her body), two dancers create a loop (gulma) called *shrinkhalika*, then three dancers create a net (*jaala*) like formation called *lataa*, and four dancers make a *pindibandha* where they include a dance, which is called *bhedyaka*. (292–3).

"Pindi is used in short *Aasaarita*, *Shrankhalika* is used in where there is variety of rhythm (laya), *latabandha* in a middle length Aasaarita, and in the long one the *bhedyaka* is used." (4/294)!

Of the four types of *pindibandhas*, only *bhedyaka* has dance. This statement by Bharata Muni makes it clear that the first three *pindibandhas* are performed standing. In the first three *pindibandhas* the dancers only take on the form of deities. And after taking on the form they freeze for some time, that might be the reason for Bharata Muni to state that while (*jaala*) *pindibandha* is being executed on stage the dancers who are next in line should not dance.

Now here it is necessary for us to say that, from this verse, the misconception prevalent among dancers, that the fundamental / technical meaning of *Pindibandha* is to make a formation with others or to do group-dancing, will be dispelled. *Pindibandha* is taking on the form of the deity by the dancer then using that *pindibandha* in performing any of the four kinds of *pindibhandhas* from *pindii* to *bhedyaka*. However, this will always be in conjunction with an *Aasaarita* or *Vardhamaanaka* song. This is the real intent of Bharat Muni's words.

In the conclusion on his comments on *Pindibandhas*, Bharat Muni has said, "Pindi has various forms (methods of use) such as *Yantra*, *Bhadrasanas* and *Shikshayoga*, which should be employed by the performers! *Vardhmanaka* (song) should also employ the same! And now I (Bharata Muni) will narrate the process of songs and verses!" (4/296)

THE ORIGIN OF MUURTIPUUJAA (IDOLATRY) FROM PINDIBANDHAS

From the nineteenth century onward, all Indian philosophies and their practices have been subject to one burning question: where, how and why did the abstract Vedic gods become idols? During the Vedic *Yajna*, despite the anthropomorphism of a deity, he was not given a gross form. The offerings of food/ sacrifice were offered in the *yajna* fire from where it reached the deity. When did the anthropomorphized yet subtle *devataa* take the form of an idol and started accepting the *naivedya* offerings? It is difficult to find the evidence of the steps that led to this process.

European scholars, who considered Greek civilization as supreme, are of the opinion that idolatry and the development of the Divine temple first took place in Greece and then under its influence, idol worship and temples came to India! For them archaeological evidence is paramount. It's true that the archaeological remains of temples (including the *garbha griha, mandapa* and *parikramaa*) in India are of a period several centuries later than the remains of temples in Greece.

But even if this argument is accepted, why would the Vedic gods of India, who have been anthropomorphized in the Vedic mantras, wait for several centuries after the Vedic period to wait for a Greek influence to

take the shape in wood or stone. It is also worth considering why did the people who followed the formless worship in India all of a sudden started to copy the Greek mode of idol worship? And when was there mass contact of Indian population with the Greek culture? Not even after Alexander's incursion into a small portion of India.

Changes in the method of worship are possible only through internal development, and not through external influence. The change brought about by an external influence is a forced will upon people, it is not an act of free will of the people. *Pindibandha*'s appearance in dance is organic, internal metamorphosis, of free volition and a natural development. And it is indisputable that the use of *Gitas* such as *Aasaarita, Vardhamaanaka, Chandaka, Paanik, Gaathaa* and other *Saptaruupaka* category songs such as *Madraka, Aparantaka, Ullyopaaka,* and others were contemporary performance genres of the vedic *yajnas*. On examining the elements of their production, it becomes clear that the ritual of the vedic *yajna* (*paathya* from *Rk Veda*, *gaana* from *Sam Ved*a, and abhinaya from *Yajur Ved*a), *Nrtta* from Shankara's *Taandava* and the 14 types of *Gitas* and *Saptaruupakas* mentioned above, combined to create the *natyaveda/natyashilp*a. We may safely assume that this Veda-originating art form called *Natya* is not much later than the age when *yajnas* were the main form of worshiping the Divine. If there is an appearance of the *Pindibandhas* in the Vedic *Rudra* (later on called Shiva) through *nrtta*, then to look for the evolution of idol worship elsewhere is an illusion.

WESTERN HYPOTHESIS OF ARYA DRAVIDIAN DISTINCTION

The process by which the formless Gods became idolized has been seen as a different sort of historical process. Some scholars opine that Vedic yajna had no connection with the idolization of Gods and idol worship. According to this view, in order to understand the difference in methods of worship, it is paramount to understand, "where, how and for what reason" does one worship. According to this view, (where?): *yajna* is performed under the sky placing the *chiti* (*yajnavedika*), but idol worship is done by placing the idol in a pavilion or a mandapa that has been constructed on a mandala (a demarcated area on the land that has been duly sanctified)

(How?): The *agni*/fire, mantra and a priest are essential in a *yajna*, but in idol worship an offering (such as flowers etc), song, and devotion are sufficient. The worshipper does not require a priest as a medium, he can himself worship with songs and flowers. (why?): *yajna* is performed to propitiate the *devatas* who dwell in the sky who can accept only offerings

made into the sacred fire from which the smoke as a carrier rises to the sky and delivers the offerings to gods. But to the idols/*muurtis* we can make the offering ourselves. Hence, worship through *yajna* and idol are completely different, therefore the societies that practiced these methods of worship would have differed from each other in many ways. The worship through the medium of fire is called *yajna*, whereas idol worship is called puja. There is no mention of the word '*puja*' or '*upaasanaa*' in the Vedic texts.

This view is located in modern Western anthropology! For those subscribe to the Western view, the pagan idol-worshiping societies were separate from the Aryans of the Vedic period who according to the proponents of the Aryan invasion/migration theory came from a land far away from

India. For those scholars who consider the Vedic Aryans to be from outside India, idol worship or '*upaasanaa*' was a non-Aryan and Dravidian worship. According to the these theorists, Vedic Aryans had to accept the dominance of the Dravidians at a later period.

Vedic *yajna* declined and idol worship gained popularity and became predominant. Many scenarios have been imagined to explain the correlation between the two methods of worship. Natalya Lidova has made the second chapter of *Natyashastra*, '*Rangamandapa* and *Rangapujana*' the basis of her argument and has imagined that the three non-Vedic elements such as 1.Mandala 2. Mandapa and 3. Murti/idol were established first in *Natya*. This is the entry of a worship tradition in *Natya* which is non-vedic and Dravidian. Vedics were under the influence of non-vedics from an earlier time when they invented a ceremony recorded in the the Artharva Vedic tradition called Brahmayaga. This is mentioned in *Atharva Veda* Appendix 29 B. The act of *Brhamayaga* was done within a consecrated space or mandala. As Lidova puts it, "the *Brahmayaga*, that came down to us in a source of the late/post-Vedic period – *Atharva Veda-parishishta* XIXb of *Saunaka* school. My main point is to demonstrate that the Brahmayaga ritual represents the closest and direct counterpart of the consecration rite of the new temple theatre known from the Chapter III of the *Natyasastra*". For internet reference see: https://www.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/14thWSC/programme/13/Lidova.pdf.

Lidova Natalya surmises that in old age some Atharvavedi Brahamin Purohits took on the role of actors. They started to enact as idols of the devataas and thus the elements of Dravidian worship emerged on stage that later became the Natyashastra tradition.

Such surmises rest on belief in the foreign incoming of the Aryans who are said to have invaded the indigenous Dravidians of Indus civilization. This opinion is not as acceptable as before, nor has any archaeological evidence been found till date to support it. There is no consensus

on the homeland of the Aryan community among the Western scholars either. There is a speculation that Aryans were originally from Norway or from Turkey and even South Russia. In my opinion, it is unnecessary to look for the origin of elements of 'Puja' beyond Yajna. The Brahmins would not have allowed any method of worship outside the yajna unless the Dravidians had subjugated them by violence. This is nothing more than an anti-brahmin polemic. Western theory of Aryan-Invasion are self-contradictory. They first project the Aryans/Brahmins as cruel victorious warriors and then turn them into kind-hearted rulers who adopted the culture of theirsubjects. This is mere modern political propaganda and a plan to send across the message that the so-called Dravidians (present Tamil people) can become powerful and crush the modern North Indian upper castes.

In my view, the birth or the origin of *natya* from the vedic rituals and texts as given in *Natyashastra* emerging as *pindibandhas* or danced postural *muurtis* seen in the body of the performer, is an organic evolution of a specific art form. It is an outcome of the broad vision of the Vedic Aryans. Firstly, elements of text, song, acting and rasa were taken from the four Vedas, then the feminine force (played by *apsaras*) was added to manifest as the delicate and graceful movements of the body which emerged as *karanas-angahaaras-rechakas-pindibandhas*, in the sequence called *nrtta /taandava/lasya* that was finally applied into the performance of *mahageetas*. It created a tree of life or *kalpavriksha* arising from the same source called vedic *yajna*.

People can doubt my claim that the idea of a idol or shape first emerged in *pindibandhas* first done in *nrtta*. They can argue that idol worship had developed separately from *natya* and the enactment of a *pindibandhas* in dance was mimesis of the *devatas* already established as idols elsewhere in the Dravidian or other Indian areas? However, no evidence of Dravidian idols being worshiped in temples is found. The famous prehistoric "dancing girl statue" of Harappa, can be accepted as a proof of the art of dance in the Indus civilization but not as an evidence of an of idol of a female goddess. Had the statue been an idol of a goddess, then we would have found many such statues. Even if we accept the prevalence of dance in the Indus civilization, there is no reason to believe that it was taken by the Aryans as something which originally never had. Dance/*nrtta* was widely prevalent in the Vedic civilization. In literature associated with the Vedas the union of song, musical instrument and *nrtta* is called the art/craft of *trivrtt*. (त्रिवृत् वै शिल्पं नृत्यं गीतं वादित्रं च (शांखायन ब्राह्मण २९/५)! This definition runs down in history right up to *Sangeetaratnaakara* of 14th century AD.

In fact, it is also worth considering whether it was possible that *pindibandha* could have been invented in *nrtta* somewhere outside of

vedic *natya*/drama? Propitiating the Devataas was an essential act in *puurvaranga* as a part of the vedic tradition of propitiating of gods. It is here only that while concentrating on the *bhaava* or form of the *devataa* that the dancer could capture the *devataa* in a *Pindibandha*. Representing through mental, verbal and gestural actions, the shape of the descent of the Deity on the stage is the great success of theatre (*naatyasiddhi*). Creation of *pindibandhas* in *puurvaranga* is the basis of the procedure of the whole *natya*/performance. The actor's physical acting, speech, expression, costume transforms/incarnates him on stage as the character through the process of *bhaavaanukirtanam*. Transforming the transcendental into material, and treating the transcendental and material as manifestations of the same force (*shakti*), has always been the basic vision of Vedic philosophy. Offered to Shiva.

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ВЕДСКО ПОРЕКЛО ПЛЕСА (*NRTTA*) И СВЕТИХ СЛИКА (*PINDIBANDHAS*)

Резиме

У раду се брани тврдњи да су се индијско позориште (*natya*), плес (*nrtta*) и у крајњој линији и сам концепт светих слика (*murtis*) развили из ведске ритуалне традиције, те да нису били каснији импорти из неведских култура попут грчке и дравидске. Стара западна теорија да ведски Аријевци и староседелачки Дравиди представљају суштински различите културе и религијске традиције, где је ведско обожавање ватре припадало Аријевцима а обожавање слика и кипова домаћој дравидској култури, овде је подвргнута оштрој критици и у потпуности одбачена. Индијска сценска уметност и, у тесној вези с њом, обожавање светих представа или идола најбоље се могу разумети као производи аутохтоног домаћег развоја, које није додиривао и оптерећивао било какав страни утицај.

Кључне речи: *Nrtta*, *Pindibadhas,* древно индијско позориште, обожавање идола, ведска поезија.